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SUBJECT: TV CO-OP PROPOSAL FOR NIGERIA

REF: STATE 210798

¶1. SUMMARY: The U.S. Mission to Nigeria would like to propose a TV co-op on "Democratic Elections: Lessons from 2006 US Mid-Term Elections." This co-op will be done by four persons Independent Radio and Television crew of Lagos-based Africa Independent Television (AIT), and Kano-based Freedom Radio. AIT is the most-popular Nigerian private TV station with international satellite license and broadcasts to the US and other African countries, while Freedom Radio is the largest private radio station in Northern Nigeria with liberal editorial policy and a large Muslim and Hausa-speaking youth audience. END SUMMARY.

¶2. The 2007 elections will be a test for the survival of Nigeria's democracy. Competition for elected political offices has expanded since the Military left the stage in 1999 with 30 political parties now registered. The 2003 elections at the local state and federal levels were characterized by violence due to widespread voting irregularities as well as procedural flaws, particularly in collating and counting votes. The ruling party won and efforts by the opposition to challenge the results were unsuccessful. The recent attempts to circumvent constitutional term limits is heating up and posing a serious challenges to a smooth democratic transition in ¶2007.

¶3. The target audience would be "average" Nigerians who are just beginning to understand their rights and roles in a transparent, democratic society; those with some high school or college education, those under age 45, those working as civil servants in state and local governments and generally those with enough income to purchase and read newspapers occasionally or watch television news regularly, and those with little or no education who listen to radio news programs regularly in either English or Hausa language and through that, able to form opinions and influence decisions. This is not the "A" list of society, but rather the majority of Nigerians who can make a difference in a truly democratic setting where the government is really accountable to the people.

¶4. We envision the TV co-op program focusing on the 2006 US Mid-Term elections; issues; electioneering campaign processes; and events reflecting broad-based participatory democracy. It will emphasize how issues shape voters decisions and why those decisions expressed by their ballots should be respected. The Coop will also emphasize the importance of transparency in governance and peaceful processes for changing corrupt leaders through the ballot boxes. This TV Co-op will emphasize that elections at other levels such as state legislatures and the congress are as important as the Presidential election. The coop will explore how issues are addressed in the U.S. Post believes that the TV Coop could provide valuable lessons learned for Nigeria's 2007 elections. Such a program would link directly to the Mission MPP goal of democracy and governance.

¶6. We propose four crew members, three TV crew members from the AIT, and one Radio reporter from the Freedom Radio, Kano for the TV Co-op.

¶7. PAS Information Officer, Rudolph Stewart is the Mission point of contact (e-mail: StewartRE@state.gov, telephone numbers: office-234-9-461-4202; home 234 -9-314-3862 and mobile 234-803-665-1240. Please also CC PAO Lagos Atim Eneida George (e-mail GeorgeAE@state.gov on subsequent cables and e-mail responses.

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